

Ohio is one of the few states which does not provide for an annual valuation of real estate, which results in many inequalities between individuals and between tax districts.

In connection with this re-appraisal, Mr. Zangerle is issuing land value maps showing the foot front values for different streets. The highest appear to be \$15,000 along Euclid avenue.

## Horace Wenzel Awards The Prize

OUR readers will recall that Mr. Horace Wenzel, one of the interesting group that gather at "The Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle" conducted by E. Wye, said he would give a prize of twenty-five dollars to any reader of *LAND AND FREEDOM* who would send authentic information regarding the rumored Single Tax in Russia, or if that were impossible, some data that could be relied upon concerning the changes in the system of land tenure in that country.

In our July-August number appeared a communication from Mr. W. A. Warren, of Kemorova, Siberia, in which he said:

In regard to the land policy of the Russian Government, it is fully indicated in the provisional constitution adopted by the All-Russian Congress of Soviets on July 10, 1918. That the framers of the constitution considered the clause dealing with the land the most important part of the document is evident from the fact that it is placed immediately after the preamble and declaration of rights. The clause is as follows: "Chapter Two (a) For the purpose of realizing the socialization of land, all private property in land is abolished, and the entire land is declared to be national property and is to be apportioned among husbandmen without any compensation to the former owners, in the measure of each one's ability to till it."

And elsewhere in the same letter:

Until recently the peasants were required to pay a general property tax in addition to the land tax. At the last session of the All Russian Congress, a law was enacted known as the Single Agriculture Tax Law. As I understand it, this law relieves the peasants from all taxation except the land tax or rent. The city or town dwellers still pay the general property tax. The peasants constitute about 85 per cent. of the population, so it may be considered a pretty close approximation to the Single Tax. It is reasonable to expect that the city dwellers will soon make a demand to be placed on the same footing as the peasants.

And again:

One of the saving graces of the government here, is that it is not afraid to try experiments. There are no sacred business and vested interests that must be handled as carefully as bird's eggs. The eight hour work day is general and I have heard of no strikes of any importance since I have been in Russia. If a man is dissatisfied with his job he has the land to go to.

On recommendation of E. Wye, Mr. Horace Wenzel has awarded the prize to Mr. Warren. But he suggests at the same time that the Editor of *LAND AND FREEDOM* write to Mr. Warren acquainting him with his success and stating that one half of the prize, or \$12.50 will be forwarded him now, if he so designates, and the other \$12.50 be retained here to await another letter from him describing in some detail, if possible, the method pursued in Soviet Russia of determining and apportioning the land rent of agricultural holdings. This seems to be a necessary corollary of what he has already written.

This instruction of Mr. Wenzel has been carried out, and Mr. Warren in far off Siberia notified of his good fortune. We thank both Mr. Wenzel and E. Wye for their interest in this subject, Mr. Wenzel for his generosity in making the offer as well as the prompt award. Those who frequent the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle are now familiar figures to the readers of *LAND AND FREEDOM* who have enjoyed their animated discussion of social and economic subjects carried on with such delightful vivacity. We think of the Mermaid Inn and other literary resorts made famous by the choice spirits who congregated there. Hardly less inspiring are the forward-looking men and women—and some others—who gather at the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle, with E. Wye as the gracious and tolerant-minded host.

## Reply to a Critic

IN the September issue of the *Institute News*, a periodical published by Professor Richard T. Ely of Madison, Wisconsin, whose disinterestedness in his studies of Land Economics has become a subject of discussion, if not of suspicion, there appears a critique of an interesting book by John S. Codman of Boston, entitled "Employment and Our Revenue Problem." The review is too long to quote in full, but the main objection raised by the critic may be put in the following words: "What inducement will there be to utilize land if the Government confiscates land values?" To this query the following reply was sent by one of our correspondents.

EDITOR, INSTITUTE NEWS:—

In the September issue of the *Institute News* appears what I regard as a very shallow criticism of an important book—Codman's "Employment and Our Revenue Problem." I feel sure that you will be anxious to call the attention of your readers to the unintentional error.

Your critic asks what inducement to utilize land will remain if the Government confiscates land values. In a city where 90% of the land is used by persons who do not own it, and where actual users of the land pay to the land owners an annual tax in the form of rent, which extracts every last penny of the annual land value, such a query verges on absurdity. If New York tenants can make a good living after the full rental value is confiscated

by the present owners, why should they cease to thrive, merely because the Government occupies the position which the land owners now hold. The cases are rare in this part of the country where the actual users of the land are permitted to appropriate *any* of the annual land value.

Not that Mr. Codman, if I understand him correctly, advocates government ownership of the land. The landlord, when kept in his place, can perform a useful service for the community, by acting as a tax-gatherer, even as the bee-keeper renders service in gathering honey from the bees.

The trouble with our present system is that the land owner as owner is allowed to appropriate too large a percentage of what he gathers, and hence, people are obliged to surrender their private property in the form of other taxes to make up for what he is permitted to keep. Like everyone else he is entitled to the value of services rendered, but not more. That he is deserving of a return for merely owning the land is not obvious, but he *is* entitled to the value of his improvements, if any, and to a commission on his collections. Such a system would convert him from a parasite into an asset, and would be much wholesomer for him, because he would have to indulge in more involuntary exercise.

There are other points in E. W. M.'s critique, which might be traversed. Until he learns the fundamental fact that the confiscation (dreadful word) of annual ground rent or land value does not diminish, but rather enhances, the returns to capital invested in utilizing the land, there is no use in discussing the subtler aspects of the matter."

## Why Britain Wanes

RAYMOND TURNER whose work entitled "Ireland and England" contributed, at least to the extent of its circulation, to the misunderstanding of the Anglo-Irish problem during the war, is author of an article in the *Yale Review* on "The Future of Britain." It is gloomy reading to those who regard the downfall of the British Empire as a matter of regret. His forebodings justify the belief that the ultimate defenders of stern and unbending Toryism will be found in the American Universities. He shudders at the prospect that "Labor", which he seems to regard as synonymous with Sovietism, will exercise a powerful influence on the future of Great Britain. No comment is made on the justice of his political views, but his economic shortsightedness is deplorable. He points out that Britain has increased its population to such a degree as to be incapable of self-support by British produce, but he does not emphasize the important fact that this condition of affairs was brought about under the rule of the classes whose downfall he deplures.

England imports 80% of her food supplies and produces 20%. These figures might be reversed if her antiquated and outworn land system had not depopulated her rural

regions and driven her peasantry into mill towns to be turned into raw material for manufactures. Her upper classes pursued this policy with open eyes, because a factory hand could be made a more prolific producer of wealth than a peasant could. Dividends won in the fight with rents, and large areas of the rural sections of England today are as bare of population as some of the parts of Canada to which the population is emigrating. The blight of the landlord is over it all, and if the day should come which Professor Turner predicts when England shall be as "Niniveh and Tyre" it will be due to bloated aristocracy, which wallowing in the wealth of an exploited world, raised no hand to save its own race from extinction on its native soil.

## The Single Tax and Nothing But the Single Tax

ARE Single Taxers, Single Taxers? Or are they sectarians holding a complex set of beliefs, all related in a way to each other, in which the Single Tax finds some place in the setting? These are questions not of minor, but of serious importance, as they serve to indicate the central problems of our propaganda work.

Let us define. There are two meanings to the word "Single Taxer." One refers to the man as an individual in which case the thesis of this article does not apply. As an individual a Single Taxer may hold one hundred beliefs as to the relation of the Single Tax to other situations, and as to the "philosophy" upon which it is based. Again the thesis of this article does not relate to the truth or falsity of the beliefs in question. All such discussion is, per se, irrelevant. It maintains that the Single Taxers *acting as such in groups* have but one minimum belief, and only one, viz: the Single Tax. This at once sweeps away all sectarianism as it allows the utmost liberty of personal belief consistent with adherence to the minimal dogma. It is true that the color of a movement is not derived from its minimal belief, but instead from the hundreds of accruals, which make up one's mental picture of a Single Taxer. But this color is interesting only from a literary viewpoint and not from an engineering viewpoint. We are social engineers, who have to do a certain job. Once we recognize this we will be more hospitable to heresy within the ranks. And the more heretics a movement has, the better. Human diversity being infinite, no one can hope to convert the mass of men to a set of one hundred propositions. But they can be converted to one proposition, with liberty to be what they will in aught else.

What is the minimal belief? It is this. The rent of land should belong to the people, because by this means a great improvement will take place in the condition of the overwhelming majority of mankind.